

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider the above-captioned patent application in view of the following remarks.

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 2, 3, 5, 17 and 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as allegedly being rendered obvious by Asano (U.S. Patent No. 6,351,291 B1) in view of Knox et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,351,292 B1, hereinafter "Knox"). The Examiner also rejected claims 4 and 19 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as allegedly being rendered obvious by Asano in view of Knox, and further in view of Shibamiya et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,926,174, hereinafter "Shibamiya"). In addition, the Examiner rejected claims 6, 7 and 9 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as allegedly being rendered obvious by Asano in view of Knox, and further in view of Suga et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,215,674, hereinafter "Suga"). Moreover, the Examiner rejected claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as allegedly being rendered obvious by Asano in view of Knox, and further in view of Shibamiya, and further in view of Suga. The Examiner also rejected claims 10, 11 and 12-16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as allegedly being rendered obvious by Asano in view of Knox, and further in view of Cooper (U.S. Patent No. 5,489,947). Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections, as follows.

In each of the above obviousness rejections in the above-referenced patent application, Asano is the primary reference cited by the Examiner. The inventor and the assignee in Asano are the same as the inventor and the assignee in the above-captioned patent application. Asano has a U.S. filing date of March 29, 2000. The above-captioned patent application has a foreign priority date of August 15, 2000. In order for a reference to be qualifying prior art reference for purposes of a

35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection, the reference also must be qualifying prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 102. Asano does not qualify as prior art under any of the 35 U.S.C. § 102 sub-sections. Therefore, Asano does not qualify as a reference that may be used to render the claimed invention obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the obviousness rejections in the above-captioned patent application at least for this reason.

CONCLUSION

Applicant respectfully submits that the above-captioned patent application is in condition for allowance, and such action is earnestly solicited. If the Examiner believes that an in-person or telephonic interview with Applicant's representatives would expedite the prosecution of the above-captioned patent application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney of records. Applicant believes that no fees are due as a result of this response. Nevertheless, in the event of any variance between the fees determined by Applicant and those determined by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, please charge any such variance to the undersigned's Deposit Account No. 01-2300, referencing attorney docket number 107317-00030.

Respectfully submitted,



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